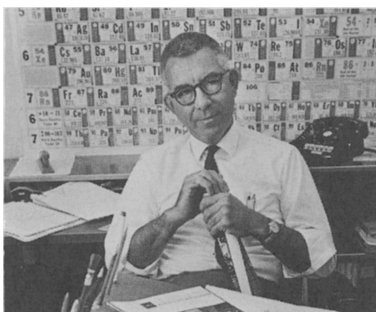




## PAYING THE PRICE OF PUBLISHING



Last Fall several scientific journals were reported<sup>1</sup> to be detecting signs of resistance to paying page charges—the charges billed to an organization for publishing the results of research sponsored by that organization. Fortunately, the American Nuclear Society receives excellent cooperation from organizations whose staff members author papers for *Nuclear Applications* and *Nuclear Science & Engineering*, nor are there signs that this cooperation will not continue. Nevertheless, page charges are important and should not be taken lightly. The ANS, like many of the other professional societies, has a keen interest in the subject, not merely because, if other journals experience difficulty in collecting page charges, we, too, might begin to have the same difficulty. Rather, our concern comes from the fact that page charges are simply one important facet of the entire information dissemination-retrieval picture, in which the ANS plays such an active, vital role.

Invented some 30 years ago by the American Institute of Physics, page charges are a sensible means of avoiding unrealistically high subscription rates or an unfair drain from members' dues in support of non-members' papers. Hopefully, they also help to minimize the amount of trivia that is offered for publication. Without page charges, journals would be forced to price themselves out of reach of most individuals, thus losing much effectiveness. When a person must go to the library to look up something, instead of being able to consult his own copy, information dissemination is slowed down. How many times do you consult the inexpensive but ubiquitous *Nuclear Science Abstracts* for a strictly chemical subject on which you know you could find much more information in another abstract journal that is too expensive for individual ownership—if you only had the time to go over and dig the latter out of the library!

Page charges are also a legitimate cost of performing the research and ought to be universally recognized as such. "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light." If the results of the work are not disseminated, the only value will be to those who did the work; yet, everyone must recognize that his own work is based on that of others and would have been impossible if no one before him had published. Moreover, publications have a monetary value to the individual author in prestige and ultimately salary and to the employer in the kind of genuine advertising that helps recruit other qualified personnel and build confidence in the product. It is, therefore, unfair and unrealistic not to expect part of the publication cost to be borne by those who put the information into the dissemination-retrieval system.

Stop-gap measures, such as limiting the number of pages available for nonpaying articles or reducing the size of the journals by rejecting more papers or backlogging them, can only reduce the quality and effectiveness of the system because they allow considerations other than those of an editorial review nature to determine what goes into the system.

Universities and many companies recognize the need for having their own well-stocked libraries, for paying for the labor of doing literature searches, for investigating computer storage and retrieval of information, and for subscribing to abstracting journals, bulletins that list the contents of other journals, and translation services. Of what avail would all this effort be without good primary publications or at least some equivalent repository of primary information?

Journals such as *Nuclear Applications* may not last forever. We can envision a gigantic information repository-dispensary operating with a computer that prints out personalized "journals" according to each reader's own keyword profile representing his personal and professional interests and then transmits this retrieved information periodically to him via Satcom satellite. However, whether information is disseminated by printer's ink and postage or by magnetic tape and satellites, the price will always be too high for the end user to bear the entire cost. Either those putting information into the system must pay part of the cost or there will have to be some kind of subsidy that, in effect, taxes those who have no direct part in the system at all.

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<sup>1</sup>PHILIP M. BOFFEY, "Journals Fear Damaging Decline in Page Charge Revenues," *Science*, 162, 884 (November 22, 1968).